

which is the national version of your local credit bureau, considering downgrading the United States debt to the tune of about \$387 billion to in fact create much higher costs for all of us in this country in paying that debt, rolling it over on a periodic basis. It also includes an article about the Mexican economy and the fact that in their credit crunch, loans are today almost impossible to get; and, if you can get them, they are ranging at the 50-percent level.

The reason I bring that up is this is a country that is in deep trouble today just for contemplating default. This country stepped in and helped prevent that and still, just because they flirted with default, today it is almost impossible to get a loan in that country.

We would be, by this action here that is being brought about by the freshman Republicans and others who are irresponsible, in my view, about how they want to conduct our public policy debate, are courting this kind of disaster.

We are about to move to a point where our U.S. bonds, which are the best bonds you can get anywhere in the world, which pay the lowest interest rates because of their security and lack of risk, will fall into the category of almost junk bonds. Here we are, a country that theoretically has learned about the perils of junk bonds, having come through our S&L crisis, we understand that these kinds of high yield bonds we call junk bonds, pay a premium, because of the risk involved, because of the potential for default.

It is a lesson we have got to remember as we continue to do our business in this Congress. Hopefully, the effort that Mr. KENNEDY is leading and Mr. BENTSEN and others to get this Congress to adopt a clean debt limit extension, what we mean by that is to deal with the credit rating of this country without encumbering it with any other extraneous activities, any other legislation that ought to be dealt with in separate vehicles.

We think, and I think Members of the Republican Party honestly agree with us, that if we know what is good for our country, we will act precipitously today, tomorrow, next week, whenever we can possibly get the attention of the leadership of this institution to guarantee that we do not allow ourselves to slip into default and to provide long-term detriment, additional cost to us as individuals and as taxpayers and as a Nation.

We need to sign this discharge petition. We need to bring our Republican colleagues of good will, who are willing to be independent and stand up for what is right for this country, to join us so that we can have sanity reign here and so that we are not going to find extortion and blackmail on something as fundamental to this country as the extension of that debt limit occurring.

Remember, we have written the checks. It is a question of whether we are going to cover those drafts when

they come to the bank. I want to thank the gentlewoman from Connecticut for taking the time to give the American people and our colleagues a better understanding of something that I think we never really entertained, never thought was possible, until just recently when we began to see just how far irresponsibility was leading the minority, the majority party in the direction of bringing about a real financial disaster for this country.

Ms. DELAURO. I want to thank my colleague from California for just outlining what it is all about. I want to thank my other colleagues who joined with us this afternoon, and I just want to say that the issue is credit rating, the credit rating of the United States.

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When you hear the words "debt limit, debt extension," put that aside. Credit rating, that is what this is about, and whether or not we are going to say that the United States will continue to have the best credit rating in the world, which it currently has.

I would just say to you that we do have people, we have a group of people in this House that are willing to do harm to the credit rating of the United States by defaulting on our debt. This would be for the first time in this Nation's history. They are prepared to do this, and even have talked about this in terms of a strategy for holding the President hostage, for blackmailing the President to try to get something from him on the issue of the budget.

We have put to rest the issue of the balanced budget. The President has laid one on the table. It is now my Republican colleagues who are walking away from the balanced budget that the President has put down, which they asked for.

What I am begging the leadership, the Republican Gingrich leadership of this House to do, listen to Wall Street when they say what difficulty we will be in the world if this happens to the United States; listen to Main Street; listen to the working men and women of this country, who will see their adjustable rate mortgages on their homes go up \$1,200 as my colleague, the gentleman from Massachusetts, has said. Credit card payments, because the interest rates will go up, will be higher. Towns and cities and States will find, and school districts and water districts, that their bonds will be in difficulty. That is all the result of tampering with the credit rating of the United States. It will have a disastrous effect on the United States and on the people of this country.

We cannot let this happen. What we need to do is to send the President of the United States a clean debt limit credit rating bill, so that in fact we can continue on as the great Nation that we have been, and that our Founding Fathers sought for us.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, if we don't pass a debt limit extension and the country defaults on the national debt, the result will be devastating.

The Republicans don't believe Treasury Secretary Rubin when he warned of default. Instead, they have resorted to a dangerous game of chicken with our Nation's economy.

If we do default on the national debt, it will have an adverse effect on so many people. Social Security and veteran benefit recipients may not receive checks. Interest rates would rise dramatically, affecting home, car, and student loans. Bond prices would fall dramatically, causing people to sell in fear of this.

First, the Republicans held Government employees hostage in their attempt to get the President to cave in to their extreme balanced budget plan. And now, they are fooling around with the possibility of defaulting on the debt.

They just never learn that their extreme bullying tactics just aren't going to work.

We can't afford to default on the national debt. We need a clean debt limit extension.

VOTING BALLOTS PRINTED IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES, ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF GOVERNMENT EXCESS

The Speaker pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Wisconsin [Mr. ROTH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ROTH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call attention to another example of Government excess. In the spirit of so-called multiculturalism, the Federal Government has mandated since 1965 that voting ballots and materials be printed in dozens of languages other than English. Today there are some 375 voting districts across this country that are required to print ballots in foreign languages.

In a classic example of an unfunded mandate gone amok, politicians in Washington are forcing States and localities to provide multilingual ballots without providing the funds to implement the ballots. This Don Quixote mandate, the legislation that has caused this mandate is the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Under the law, countries must provide multilingual voting information and ballots in the language of any minority groups with more than 10,000 eligible voters in that country.

In the real world, these services should not be needed at all. Voting rights are extended to citizens of this country, and one needs to demonstrate some fluency in English to become a U.S. citizen, so why all of these ballots. In other languages other than English? In practice, this requirement for citizenship has been unenforced, but that does not change the facts. By law, English is the requirement for citizenship in this country. We should not be providing Government services, in direct contradiction with the spirit, if not the letter, of the law's requirement.

Moreover, these services are expensive, as well as unnecessary. It might surprise supporters of multilingual ballots to know that very few people actually request such special treatment. By and large multilingual ballots are rarely requested, and even less often used, even when they are provided. That is

what makes these costs and their cost to the local taxpayers all the more shocking.

Election officials in Alameda County, CA, told me recently that they spent almost \$100,000 to produce ballots in Spanish and Chinese for the entire country, yet only 900 were ultimately requested. You can do the math. The taxpayers of Alameda County spent over \$100 for every multilingual ballot that was actually used in that June 1994 election. This appears to be a trend.

The last election in Los Angeles saw ballots printed in six languages other than English. Among them were Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, and Korean. It cost the city government over \$125,000 to prepare the materials. Yet, and listen to this, only 927 ballots were used. Los Angeles spent over \$135 for each voter the city helped.

Even small communities are not immune. Long Beach spent a relatively modest \$1,026 preparing multilingual materials for its eligible voters when only 22 requests came in. The township spent over \$280 per multilingual voter. As a frustrated election official told me recently, "This is a lot of money to help a few people." That official could not be more right.

These ballots have other, more serious costs associated with them, too. Providing these special services creates the fiction that newcomers to this country can enjoy the full benefits of citizenship without the language of the land, which is English. How can a citizen cast an informed ballot in a foreign language when most candidates' platforms, stump speeches, and media coverage are in English? Exercising one's rights of citizenship involves more than just casting a vote. It means making a thoughtful decision regarding an issue or a candidate.

Multilingual voting ballots give individuals the right to vote without granting the power to cast an informed vote. The logical extent of the argument behind the multilingual ballots is to provide these services in all the languages spoken in the country. After all, why should we privilege one linguistic minority over another? Should we not provide news reports and election coverage in all these languages, so these citizens have access to all the information they need to cast an informed vote? The simple and obvious answer is that we cannot. There are 327 languages spoken in the United States today. We cannot provide these services in all of these languages. What is more, we should not.

CALLING FOR A MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN TAIWAN AND THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. TORRICELLI] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TORRICELLI. Mr. Speaker, it is said that in history, great conflicts begin more often from miscalculation than by purposeful design. Even in our own time, it is said that the Korean war may have begun by the unfortunate statement of Mr. Avenuees that the defense perimeter of the United States began in the Sea of Japan, and not the 38th parallel.

A few years ago the United States Ambassador to Iraq suggested to Saddam Hussein that in a dispute between Kuwait and Iraq, the United States would regard the matter as an internal problem in the Arab world. Today in the straits of Taiwan a foundation may be being laid for a similar misunderstanding.

I take the floor today, Mr. Speaker, as one Member of this institution, in the hope that the leaders of our country, our great allies in the People's Republic of China, come to some mutual understanding of events that are taking shape even as we speak between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China.

Only weeks ago the Peoples Republic fired missiles into the airspace and the shipping lanes around Taiwan. It is now openly being discussed what further actions, including military measures, might be taken. The leaders in Beijing are displeased with comments or activities of President Li after the Taiwanese elections.

It is the policy of the United States Government to have formal diplomatic relations with the People's Republic and to recognize it as the sole legitimate Government of China, but the Taiwan Relations Act is infinitely more complex. It also permits, and indeed, in my judgment, provides a responsibility for the United States Government to continually reassess our role and obligations if the security situation of Taiwan were to deteriorate.

I recognize that the relationship between Beijing and Washington is one of the cornerstones of world peace. It is one of this Nation's most important economic, cultural, and security relationships. I want it to be strong and I want it to be sound. But I also recognize, and history bears witness, the United States keeps its obligations, recognizes its relationships, and meets the needs of its friends.

I trust and I hope that Beijing in the coming months will act responsibly, retain the commitment that any dispute it might have with the people on Taiwan and the question of the larger China is resolved peacefully, responsibly, and diplomatically. But simply because Members of this institution and the larger U.S. Government are committed to good relations with Beijing, simply because we want good political relationships, increased investment and trade, simply because of the progress of all these years, they should not put aside that this is still a nation that keeps its obligations, defends the weak against the strong, and holds democratic governments with

pluralistic governments in a singular and special category.

This is, after all, not the Taiwan of 20 years ago. There is a free press, a pluralist democracy, and now, a popularly elected President. That does not negate aspects of, or in its totality, the Taiwan Relations Act. It is simply an attempt to make an effort on my own part to communicate with the leaders in Beijing to let them know that the firing of the missiles was not only wrong, but threatening military action is irresponsible.

However they may calculate it, whatever their advisers may say, at the end of the day, in spite of all the investment and all the hopes for good relations with China, the world will not watch a military incursion, a renewal of hostilities, or even irresponsible acts that threaten the peace.

So I hope each in our private ways, parties to this potential dispute, will again renew their commitment to peace and ensure that our actions remain responsible, but that all parties at the end of the day recognize that the United States will not witness the forceful end of the Government of Taiwan.

TRAVEL HABITS OF THE SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. CHRYSLER] is recognized for 40 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. CHRYSLER. Mr. Speaker, once again, the Commerce Department has made news. But it's not news about any new trade deals it won for American business. It's for the travel habits of the Secretary of Commerce. It seems that the Secretary has a penchant for travel, one that has cost the taxpayers of this country millions of dollars.

In fact, the current Secretary's travel costs have increased by over 145 percent from that of his predecessor. One can only assume he is using the same travel agency as the Secretary of Energy.

This weekend, the Los Angeles Times reported that the Department of Commerce's own inspector general was sharply critical of Secretary Ron Brown's travel expenses, noting that "His spending levels are particularly striking since he took over the job from a Republican administration that was often under fire for incurring excessive travel costs."

The Los Angeles Times goes on to add, "Brown, a former chairman of the Democratic Party, was accused by his critics of using his travel budget to gain favor with political allies and party contributors, many of whom have been invited to accompany the secretary on his extensive foreign trips."

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD the Los Angeles Times article.